JOHN MASTERS – A VOICE FROM THE COLONIAL PERIPHERY

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Abstract:

This article discusses three novels by John Masters (1914 - 1983), an ardent advocate of the British Empire. Through the characters and situations he creates, the author promotes the idea of British imperial commercialism. Masters experienced a typical life of a fifth generation English settler in India: having spent only a short period in England, the ruling center, when he was sent to school, he only knew the social and political conditions of the colonized periphery, which turned him into a unique chronicler of the Anglo-Indian history. The novelist uses the history of the East India Company, an institution that helped the Empire to succeed, as the subtext of his novels. As an ardent advocate of the Company's rule, Masters uses his novels to laud the English, as their presence in India means the improvement of living standards to the local inhabitants. *Coromandel!* (1955) presents the beginnings of the East India Company in the 17th century. In *The Deceivers* (1952) Masters shows how the Company developed into a huge administrative institution that had its own army and a well-functioning and incorruptible Indian Civil Service. In *Nightrunners of Bengal* (1951) Rodney Savage is proud that everywhere in India he is surrounded by 'symbols of the colossal empire of the Honourable East India Company'. Yet, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 ruined the Company's privileged position and it lost its administrative powers. As Masters is one of the few voices from the colonial periphery, his contribution to modern literature is unique.

Key Words: Colonial, East India Company, centre, periphery, imperialism

Introduction

On the 15 August 1947 the partition of India became a historical fact and the British Indian Empire dissolved. Starting the postcolonial period in the relations between Britain and India, the event had an enormous political, economic and cultural impact on both the British and the Indians. Obviously, the new political situation also affected the literatures of both the center and its periphery. However, while Indian authors writing in their independent country have proved deeply involved in describing and analyzing the four-hundred-year-long period of Anglo-Indian colonial system, (see , *e.g.* Ralph Crane, 1992), British authors publishing after 1947, seem to be fairly reluctant to discuss their colonial history and relatively few have chosen to deal with the Anglo-Indian colonial past. Among the latter Paul Scott (1920-1978), J.G. Farrell (1935-1979), M.M. Kaye (1908-2004) and John Masters (1914 - 1983) are the most influential British authors writing about India in the postcolonial period of Anglo-Indian history. Like Kipling, Kaye and Masters were born in India, and lived there until the late 1940s. In the new political situation after 1947 Kaye chose to settle down in England, while Masters moved to the United States.

Masters wrote nine novels about Anglo-Indian history, but so far his books have not been critically analyzed and his contribution to postcolonial literature remains on the margin of the colonial/postcolonial discourse. Masters experienced the typical life of a fifth generation English settler in India: having spent only a short period in England, the ruling center, when he was sent to school, he only knew the social and political conditions of the colonized periphery, which turned him into a unique chronicler of the Anglo-Indian history from its beginnings in the 17th century till the 1960s. Masters' early novels were written in the tradition of the American dime novel, a mass market paperback targeting popular reading audience, with the difference that Masters did not have to look for inspiration in story papers, but used his own knowledge of Indian history. Masters' first novel

Nighhtrunners of Bengal was published in 1951 and was widely sold in America; the American Literary Guild, a mail book club selling cheap editions made the novel its Book of the Month. In this way, Masters wrote his first bestseller. Discussing the situation of popular novel in America John Sutherland creates the folowing definition of the bestseller:

Very largely speaking, the bestseller has two functions. The first is economic. It exists to sell the best and make money for its producers and merchandisers. The second, more flexible function is ideological. The bestseller expresses and feeds certain needs in the reading public. It consolidates prejudice, provides comfort, is therapy, offers vicarious reward or stimulus. In some socially controlled circumstances it may also indoctrinate or control a population's ideas on politically sensitive subjects. In other circumstances, especially where sexual mores are concerned, it may play a subversive social role, introducing new codes and licence.. (1981 , 2012: 2*2)*

Masters explored both the economic and ideological aspects mentioned in Sutherland's definition. The ex-soldier of the British army in India started writing novels about India and its history in the 50s of the 20th century to earn his living in his new life situation in America, using his imperial roots and his nostalgia for the British Empire as the main source of literary inspiration. As an ardent advocate of the British Empire Masters makes an attempt to rewrite Anglo-Indian colonial history, and his novels prove that the author respects the metropolitan centre in London, but identifies with the periphery, the colonized India and its complex racial and cultural structure.

Peter Morey, one of the very few critics discussing Masters' contribution to postcolonial British literature, remarks that the novelist rewrites history in a way showing that 'imperialism was a good venture'(Morey 2000: 81). And Ralph J. Crane characterizes him as 'a fine storyteller'(Crane 1992: 23), who 'excludes the present from his story' (ibid.). Through the life of one family Masters makes a successful attempt to trace 400 years of British colonial presence in India. All his Indian novels portray members of the successive generations of the Savage family; some of them serve in the British Army, others are civil servants of the British administration in India, but whatever their occupation is they serve and guard the institution on which the English Empire was built: the East India Company, which received its Royal Charter in 1600 and continued its trading activities for nearly 300 years, constituting the economic scaffolding for the Empire 's political growth and successful development.

Main Text

This article aims to examine Masters' three early novels *Nighhtrunners of Bengal* (1951), *The Deceivers* (1952) and *Coromandel!* (1955), which illustrate the rise and fall of the East India Company, the symbol of Enflish imperialism, and its role in the Indian colonization process which is presented by Masters as a way of personal advancement and social and economic success. *Coromandel!* (henceforth abbreviated as C) begins Masters' rewriting the history of British imperialism. Coromandel means *The realm of the Cholas*, a 13th century dynasty - *Cholamandalam* in Tamil. Itis very likely that the Europeans, especially the Portuguese, who arrived at the Bengal Coast in the 15th century, corrupted the original name into Coromandel. In Masters' novel Coromandel functions as an objective correlative for the need of freedom and fulfillment of the most incredible dreams shared by the generation represented by Jason Savage and his peers. Jason, a farmer's son, who can't read and write, lives in the England that has already started building its imperial and colonial history.

Masters sets his novel in the period of 1627 -1629. By 1627 Drake, Gilbert and Raleigh are cult figures for discovery and overseas exploration - an acquaintance of Jason's 'had sailed with Drake'(C 6) and Jason keeps imaging himself sailing on his ship; England has settlements in North America and the Caribbean Islands and trades with Asia through a private trading company, the English East India Company. After King James I signs the Treaty of London in 1604, Spain ceases to be England's rival in India and the East India Company gains new space for its commercial activity becoming very active in its trading operations. When the Portuguese are ousted from the Coast by the Dutch and the English, the "First British Empire" gains its impact. The events connected with the process of removing the Portuguese from the coast, the competition between the Dutch and the British and the establishment of the East India Company as a powerful economic and political force representing British interests in the area constitute the historical background of the novel.

In *Coromandel!*, which is both a historical and a picaresque novel, the protagonist, young Jason Savage functions as a model of all those Englishmen who had the courage to participate in the

colonization process, presented by Masters as a chance to get socially and economically promoted. Jason leaves his little village in Wiltshire, goes to London, and then by sea travels to the Coromandel Coast, gathering on the way experience and knowledge, Jason is a peasant's son, but he is very ambitious and does not accept the stiff social hierarchical divisions of the 17th century England. He dreams not only about improving his social and financial situation, but he dreams about leaving his father's farm, about faraway travels as 'There was so much to know, and he knew nothing except to be a farmer's son in Shrewford Pennel'(C 7).

When Jason's ship arrives at the Coromandel Coast Jason gets unintentionally involved in the political events. Jason's captain, Drayton, sails off the coast to avoid a fight with the Portuguese ship *Isabella,* but Jason jumps overboard, because he has fallen in love with an Indian girl Parvati, who is a spy of the local Indian King. Yet, both Indians and Portuguese believe he is 'an envoy of Master Drayton's – an ambassador from King Charles' (C 146).

As a strong supporter of the British Empire, Masters rarely uses irony while describing the English in their colonies, however, in the character of Jason, the author seems to be, to some extent, criticizing the English sent to the potential colonies for their overconfidence, lack of experience and for relying on their dreams rather than facts. Ironically, the direct reason that makes Jason leave his village in England is Old Voy's map showing the place at the Coromandel Coast, where an incredible treasure is hidden. So he sets off to pursue a dream he bought from Old Voy, a local cheat and scamster. Since he is not a shrewd entrepreneur or a skilful politician he painfully learns on the spot that in spite of appearances 'Nothing was simple and straightforward here; nothing was what it seemed'(C 147). Jason boasts to himself that 'he was no fool, especially that he was learning to put aside dreams and concentrate on things that mattered, like money and power'(C 147), but he is not able to help the poor pearlers, or notice that he is manipulated by the local Indian King who 'was expecting the English to make an arrangement with him, by which the Portuguese would be got rid of'(C 145).

Masters' protagonist gets easily impressed by the beauty of India, its riches and its women, but Masters does not allow him to forget about his national pride. On his journey Jason is surrounded by many foreigners; he mixes with Indian Kings and Dutch military officials; he has Indian lovers, and a Portuguese wife, but in difficult moments he always remembers 'He was English'(C 194). When the Dutch defeat the Portuguese and the Indian kings, Jason has to leave the Coromandel Coast, but he does not leave India. When he fails as a politician he returns to pursue his dream about gaining wealth. When he learns to read he finds out from Voy's map that the real treasure is to be found on the Mountain Meru and he continues his journey accompanied by his wife Catherine. They travel through Bengal and reach Tibet to climb Mount Meru. Voy's map is like a fairy tale, but the journey itself turns Jason into a man of knowledge and experience, who is able to make real maps of India and help to strengthen England's influences in India. Philip Wegner notices that 'knowledge in the imperial world system, as we already know from Said's *Orientalism,* is a form of power' (Wegner 1993-4: 146) and during his journey around India, Jason gradually learns make the best use of the knowledge he gains. Although the British get defeated at the Coromandel Coast, two years after his arrival in India, Jason is convinced he wants to stay in the country and be useful, for everything, every sort of career, is available to an Englishman in India:

Soon we'll be back in Agra. I don't know what will become of me nor what I will do, except that I will live my life and find it wonderful. I may be an equerry in the household of the poet-empress. I can set myself to explaining the English to the emperor, or the emperor to the English.(…) I can be a scholar or a general or a merchant or a physician, or all of those at once. I can make maps and write books. (C 298)

Although in 1628 the English are defeated by the Dutch and Jason has secretly to run away from the land of his dreams, soon the British manage to work out a 'new Anglo-Dutch arrangement'(Ferguson 2004: 24) and 'on a shore site acquired in 1630, the company built a fort which, as if to advertise its Englishness, was christened Fort St George. Around it would spring up the city of Madras (ibid.). The first settlers prepared such good maps that they allowed the East India Company to expand and rule over most of the Indian territory in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The history of the East India Company is used by Masters as the subtext of *The Deceivers*, set in 1825. The story of *Coromandel!* ends in 1629 and *The Deceivers* take the reader to the mid-1820s when in the first decades of the 19th century after the turmoil of the 18th century fights, the East India

Company' s position became very strong, developing into a huge administrative institution that had its own army and a well-functioning and incorruptible Indian Civil Service:

In 1803, following the defeat of the Marathas at Delhi, the Mughal emperor himself finally accepted British 'protection'. By 1815, around 40 million Indians were under British rule. Nominally, it was still a company that was in charge. But the East India Company was now much more than its name implied. It was the heir to the Mughals, and the Governor-General was the *de facto* Emperor of a subcontinent. (...) They had robbed the Spaniards, copied the Dutch, beaten the French and plundered the Indians. Now they ruled supreme. (Ferguson 2004: 51)

The main protagonist of *The Deceivers* (henceforth abbreviated as D) is Jason's great, great grand-son William Savage, who like his great, great grand-father William is a man of action. The novel begins at a crucial moment in the character's life: William is getting married to Mary Wilson, whose father holds 'the office of Agent to the Governor-General of India'(D 8), and so decides to change his professional career: Captain Savage plans to turn into a civil servant working for the East India Company.

In the figure of William Savage, Masters presents a new type of an Englishman, an Englishman born in India (like his own father, grandfather and great grandfather), who identifies with the colonial periphery and treats it as his real home rather than England, the ruling center. *The Deceivers* is narrated by an omniscient third person narrator, and all the events are focalized through William's consciousness. In this way Masters allows his Anglo-Indian character, a representative of the periphery to speak and make it obvious that he is aware of the fact that because he was born and raised in India, he is different from his English acquaintances, although he is the colonizer. The wedding is a good occasion to confirm his conviction that he no longer feels himself to be part of the culture and tradition of the center: 'He was in a tight circle of English faces, English customs, English values, and he could not find happiness or success here. He had tried many ways and failed'(D 10-11) William looks forward to the moment the whole ceremony is over and enjoys the thought that 'Tomorrow he and his bride would be on their way out there, through the hills, to his own people'(D 11). Yet, he cannot be said to have gone native, like Kipling's Kim or Scott's Saxby. On the contrary, Masters emphasizes his character's Englishness in every sphere of everyday life: he wears English clothes, at the wedding he is dressed in his army uniform, he is warm and friendly towards his Indian servants and coworkers but he does not imitate Indian ways of behaviour. His lifestyle proves he belongs to the Westernized sphere of culture and religion. When his Indian official congratulates him on the wedding and compliments his wife's beauty he makes sure: 'It is not rude of me, by your custom, to say she is beautiful? A princess!'(D 19), which shows that the local Indians are used to respecting his special position. When the local Indians greet them in their village, their band plays "Rule, Britania". Mary cannot recognize the tune and finds it funny when her husband reminds her of its title. Yet, he does not feel offended by Mary's ignorance, because 'Perhaps he too wouldn't have recognized the tune if he had not heard bands like this one play it so often'(D 21).

But first of all, William is proud of being an English civil servant employed by the East India Company, and he is deeply concerned about its employees and policy in India: 'He was a servant of the Honourable East India Company, and that huge organization was as torn by indecision as he was' (D 29). He criticizes George Angelsmith, his rival in love and career, because he does not know his Indian staff and the area under his jurisdiction – 'It always astonished him that the people at headquarters should know so little about the districts'(D 17). Obviously, George Angelsmith is William's antagonist in the structure of the novel, introduced to show two various attitudes in profession of the Englishmen employed by the Company. George seems to be a newcomer from England, who has come to India to enjoy a fast and profitable career of an accredited representative of the Agent to the Governor-General of India, who will soon become an agent himself, whereas William, born in India, is just a Company's official responsible for a small village, but as Kipling makes one of his characters remark, the the most efficient servants are those who 'know the land and the customs of the land. The others, all new from Europe, suckled by white women and learning our tongues from books, are worse than the pestilence' (Kim, 104)

While William cares about the Indians he is responsible for – 'It was very easy here to imagine that everything was your business'(D 17), George remains uninvolved and waits for others to tell him 'if it's any of our business'(D 17). William's respect for Indians is his great advantage over George. He feels 'there was an affinity' (D 24) between himself and Chandra Sen, his Indian deputy.

Wiliam is convinced the Indians from his district trust and respect him, so he is extremely satisfied when he notices distaste in the Sen's eyes, 'because the distaste in the large eyes was for the smart, the clever, the brilliant George Angelsmith'(D 24). Interested in his own promotion only, George does nothing to help Savage deal with the difficult problem of Gopal's wife planning to become suttee the next day. He leaves it to William and his only advice is 'As far as I can see, it ought to be easy enough. Just go down there and tell 'em not to'(D 28), which proves that being a true colonizer he believes the English are entitled to show their absolute authority over every aspect of the natives' life. In contrast, William is full of doubt how to approach the problem. Having more knowledge of Indian religion than George, William hesitates whether he has enough authority to prevent the suttee case. He is supported by Chandra Sen, who tries to explain the situation to the guest.

Simultaneously, as an ardent advocate of the Company's rule, Masters uses the situation to laud the English, as their presence in India means the improvement of living standards to the local inhabitants. Masters makes Sen express his opinion which contains one of the commonly repeated excuses for English presence in India, namely, that only the British authority can allow Indians live in peace. Chandra Sen says

Here the people are so pleased with the new security, the first there has been in living memory, that they have found time and energy to complain about the things they do not like. Ten years ago they struggled from dawn to dusk, from sowing time to reaping time, just to keep alive, and dodge the freebooters and robbers, and fend off new tax extortions. Do you know the Saugor Pandits made me collect, and pay, twenty-seven different kinds of tax in a *good* (italics in the text) year? Now the people have a little time to think. And no one fills their mouth with gunpowder and explodes it if they make a protest about something. Life has changed under your benevolent government. Much is for the better. But the people want this changed and that left alone. In this matter of suttee they are ready for violence here.(D 28-29)

Putting the words into an Indian character's mouth shows that Masters believed the Indians were, or at least should be, grateful for the Company's rule (the raj) in India, but at the same time, he makes Sen point out that natives should be left a margin of freedom in some matters, for example, religion. William, who knows India and its traditions thoroughly, finds it very difficult to define his own stance on the problem whether to use his authority of the Company's official and a Christian, so a representative of entirely different religious and cultural values, to solve the problem, or leave it to the natives: 'Suttee was the people's custom and religion; only an act of despotic power could abolish it. Yet, could Christians, having power, tolerate wilful self-murder?'(D 26) William mustn't allow on an outbreak of violence, because riots would undermine the Company's position. In case of unrest, the Army would have to get involved and if any Indians got killed, the whole community would turn against the English.

William is aware that his position in the system of the Company is not very strong and he cares about his father- in- law's opinion. He worries – 'What will Mr. Wilson do if the wife of Gopal the weaver becomes suttee? How much deeper will this affair load the scale already weighted against me by adverse appeal rulings, mismanaged settlements, long-delayed civil causes? He was not a very good paper official, and he knew it'(D 31) Being in such a low state of mind William eagerly accepts Chandra Sen's suggestion that if the woman could see her husband alive, she would not kill herself. And since to Sen, who is a native, William looks 'like Gopal the weaver'(D 31), the Indian tries to convince William that 'With a little care, I do not think you could be told apart in the best light. In the dusk, never' (D 31) The trick with the camouflage works and Gopal's wife is stopped from becoming suttee.

But the suttee episode is a technical trick used by Masters to introduce William to those aspects of life in India that have been hidden from him when he is perceived as the Other by the Indians. When he pretends to be one of them he must also share their dark secrets, thanks to which he has a chance to contibute to the security of the Company's dealings in the area. On the way home he is stopped by a man who knows Gopal and who makes William watch an act of murder committed be a gang of Thugees, the Deceivers. In the Glossary to his novel Masters explains that a Thug was 'a member of a religious association devoted to highway murder and robbery; *Thuggee*, the association and its acts'(D 286). In the historical background, the Thuggees derived from the religious cult of the goddess Kali:

The Thugee cult was devoted to Kali, the goddess of death and destruction. For hundreds of years the Thugee cult practiced an organized campaign of assassinations. Strangulation was the preferred method of choice. Thugees claimed tens of thousands of victims over a 300 year span. … Though sporadic attempts were made to the extinction of the gangs it was not till Lord Bentinck (governor general of India 1833-35) took vigorous steps that the system was seriously attacked. Between 1831-37 the British hanged nearly 4000 Thugees and the cult was **presumed** eradicated. (http://www.sepiamutiny.com/sepia/archives/000322.html)

Masters sets his novel in the period between February 1825 and April 1826. According to his interpretation of the historical events, the British only then become aware of the gang's existence and start getting prepared to fight the Deceivers, who pose a serious danger to the Company's prosperity. Captain Savage admits that

In the nine years of the English Company's rule nothing had been done against the Deceivers. But William realized now that most Indians knew at least of the existence of the Deceivers; and, knowing, they could not believe the English did not also know; therefore the English officials too were sharing in the spoils. (D 240)

For several months since February till September William makes preparations to catch the members of the gang, but he has too few men at his disposal. His wife suggests he should

Raise a corps of volunteers! Compel all the important men in the district, Chandra Sen and all the others, to subscribe to a fund for paying more police. Threaten everyone with extra taxes. Hint that you'll decide cases against anyone who doesn't give money or spend a day a month patrolling the roads'(D 84) .

Destroying the Deceivers' gang in his district and attracting the authorities' attention to the problem William Savage can enjoy his sense of power and success, which at the same time is the power and success of the East India Company, whose position and operations are safe in the area. While in *The Deceivers* Masters promotes a strong belief that it is the English who bring peace and security to the Indian roads and hamlets, and the vision of 'the English sahib as India's hero'(Morey 2000: 102), who is generally loved and admired, prevails in the novel, in *Nightrunners of Bengal* the novelist offers his interpretation of the events that destroyed the Company's ruling position.

Due to the success in combating the worshippers of Kali, William's son Rodney, whose birth ends the novel and who becomes the main protagonist in *Nightrunners of Bengal* (henceforth abbreviated as NB) can say proudly 30 years later that everywhere in India he is surrounded by 'symbols of the colossal empire of the Honourable East India Company' (NB 19). In its days it functioned as a tool of power exercised by the tiny center, England, over its vast periphery. A trading institution that in 1600 was started by George, Earl of Cumberland, and 215 Knights, Aldermen and Burgesses in the mid-1850s turned into a mighty instrument of British imperialism:

The company had become a weird blend of trading corporation and administrative engine, and the English government in London controlled it. It traded as it wished, and dictated treaties. It minted money, made laws, collected taxes, and executed criminal and civil justice. It kept the peace – and made war (…) The man who was its chief representative in India, the Governor-General, had direct and almost unlimited power over a hundred million people, and indirect power over other millions living in the states. … [and] … controlled three armies; (…) and together they numbered 38,000 British and 348,000 native troops, with 524 field guns. (NB 20)

Commenting on the Anglo-Indian relations of the first half of the 19th century from the current historical perspective Lawson summarizes the situation of the time in India as follows:

Much scholarship of the twentieth century that might be termed anti-colonialist or imperialist has seen this period of British rule through the Company as disastrous for the cause of progress in India. Actions like the introduction of English Common Law in many civil and criminal processes, the westernization of Indian education by means of English language instruction, and the outlawing of certain traditional Hindu practices, such as sati (widow-burning) and *thuggee* (ritualistic banditry), have been held responsible for creating severe divisions within native societies. Such divisions, in turn, halted the natural rise of India's economy and people to the position of a modern industrial state, as its producers served the markets of a distant colonial overlord rather than the nascent national interest. (Lawson 1993: 154)

Rodney Savage is devised to be a typical representative of his generation, a man with divided sympathies, who stays in India because he believes in the civilizing mission of the East India Company. The omniscient, extradiegetic narrator emphasizes the fact that being a descendant of the Savage family Rodney has a sense of historical continuity that makes him entirely identify with the policy of the Company:

Rodney had been born in and of that empire, but still it took his breath away when he considered the power created by those English merchants who had striven here and made themselves masters of princes. … Today by luck and aggressive skill, by courage and persevering deceit, their footholds had so expanded that their Presidency of Bengal alone extended seventeen hundred miles from Burma to Afghanistan, and seven hundred miles from the Himalaya to the Nerbudda. (NB 19)

Yet, at the same time through Rodney Masters expresses his generation's criticism of the Company's policy in India in the 1850s, admitting that the pace of the changes introduced was too fast for Indians, who felt the English suddenly interfered too deeply into their customs and lifestyle. Rodney describes the current situation to his colleagues in the following analysis of the hostile attitudes prevailing among Indians:

And apart from these Army things they're affected by the same things which worry other Indians of their class and caste: suttee forbidden, female infanticide forbidden, Brahmins made subject to the criminal laws. We think those are good and just ideas, but the sepoys don't. They used to talk and try to understand our point of view; now they don't. (NB 114)

Such a tense situation must eventually lead to a disaster and the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 destroys the 300-year-old tradition of good relations between the English and the Indians. Making discourse into history, Masters makes references to all the major historical events that occurred in the first half of 1857 in India. The linear storyline of the novel helps to build up the atmosphere of exotic mystery, growing slowly with every new event introduced. From Dec 31 1856 till May 10 1857 the impression of the pastoral tranquility, the English characters' sense of profound contentment and security is gradually flawed by some annoying events and premonitions that function as metaphorical harbingers of the approaching disaster.

The atrocities of the Mutiny destroy the old social order of the Anglo-Indian community and ruin the Company's privileged administrative position. As a result,

On 1 November 1858 Queen Victoria issued a proclamation that explicitly renounced 'the right and the desire to impose Our convictions on any of our subjects'. India was henceforth to be ruled not by the East India Company – it was to be wound up – but by the crown, represented by a Viceroy. (Fergusson 2004: 154)

The formal transition of the Company's interests to the state in 1858 brought to an end the most remarkable phase in Anglo-Indian history. The story of how this trading organization became an imperial power with its own armed forces is exceptional in its own right, but there are many more lessons still to be learned from the Company's unique past. In the general context of British history, the Company's role in the development of overseas trade, the advance of empire and the evolution of the modern bureaucratic state is now more broadly accepted and appreciated. In addition, the immense impact of the Company's activities at the centre of operations in London has at last begun to permeate the written texts and overviews dealing with these years of British expansion. More needs to be done, however, because the most striking and rewarding aspect of studying the East India Company's experience is that it confounds nationalist histories of one sort or another. (Lawson 1993: 164)

Conclusion

Although he is only a voice from the colonial periphery claimed neither by the Commonwealth Literature nor 'the literature of the centre'(Mishra and Hodge 1993: 276), Masters' contribution to modern literature written after 1947 is worth the reader's attention. Commenting on Masters' literary achievement Morey remarks that:

John Masters writes adventure stories of tremendous pace and energy which carry the reader along to an Invariably thunderous climax. However, his perspective and preoccupations lead him towards an unquestioning replication of imperial narrative forms in a post-imperial world. (Morey 2000:104).

Further, Morley observes that 'since Masters writes after independence'(Morey 2000: 101), his writing even involves 'a mythologizing of the imperial enterprise'(ibid.), and calls it 'an extended

act of imaginative recolonization, or of staying on'(ibid.), while Greenberger classifies him as one of the authors writing about India, who belong to The Era of Melancholy 1935-1960 (Greenberge 1969: 177-179), melancholy caused by a sense of loss of the British raj in India.

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